

УКРАЇНСЬКА
КАТОЛИЦЬКА ЄПАРХІЯ
ПРЕСВЯТОЇ РОДИНИ
В ЛОНДОНІ



HOLY FAMILY
UKRAINIAN
CATHOLIC EPARCHY
OF LONDON

**SECOND PASTORAL LETTER
IN RELATION TO THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC**

To the Reverend Clergy, Religious and Lay Faithful of the
Eparchy of the Holy Family of London

26th March, 2020

Glory to Jesus Christ!

if you declare with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and if you believe with your heart that God raised him from the dead, then you will be saved. It is by believing with the heart that you are justified, and by making the declaration with your lips that you are saved. (Romans 10:9-10)

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ

These words of St. Paul reassure us of the true power of faith and prayer. And I feel that it is precisely this that we must rely upon in these very troubling times for the whole world. We may have become physically isolated from one another and discouraged from gathering together, yet we must unite and gather together spiritually through prayer. Our faith must continue to unite us as we beseech the Lord for his mercy and protection when adapting our daily lives to behave and act differently. The global spread of the novel coronavirus, COVID-19, and its impact has touched every one of us. None of us are immune from the effects of this pandemic, and the reality of this concerns us all. I ask that no matter how difficult your personal situation becomes, that we continue to keep God and his church at the centre of our altered lives. Let us not allow our spirit to be broken and be encouraged by the words of our Holy Father asking us to deal with today's difficulties "with the strength of faith, the certitude of hope and the fervour of charity." (Pope Francis, 8th March, 2020). Let us never forget to show our faith in God by being courteous, considerate and kind towards one another. Always having a heart of compassion for the lost and for the people that God puts in our path, enables us to mirror the example Jesus gave us. Our generosity in the support of those less fortunate than ourselves is another way God allows us to share His love for us all. *"you will be rich enough in every way for every kind of generosity that makes people thank God for what we have done. For the help provided by this contribution not only satisfies the needs of God's holy people, but also overflows into widespread thanksgiving to God; because when you*

have proved your quality by this help, they will give glory to God for the obedience which you show in professing the gospel of Christ, as well as for the generosity of your fellowship towards them and towards all.”(2 Corinthians 9: 11-13)

This week sees the need for our Eparchy to implement increasingly stringent measures to protect our faithful and clergy. This means that until further notice all public services, meetings and public gatherings in our churches and premises are to remain suspended. Where previously we have asked that some churches open their doors for private prayer, this is no longer possible. Your priests will continue to pray and celebrate the Divine Liturgy on a regular basis in private and, where possible, will continue to invite you to take part spiritually, whilst watching or listening through social media. Should this not be an option for you, please try to light a candle safely at home and read the prayers from your prayer books. Do not be afraid to ask someone close to you to help you should you need support in this.

The current restrictions on public worship will have a profound effect on how we pray during Holy Week and conduct our church Easter traditions. If during Holy Week and on the feast of the Resurrection of Christ full ‘lockdown’ isolation is still in place in the United Kingdom, then all Easter services will be conducted in the same way as we have prayed during the later weeks of Lent, that is privately without public physical participation. Again, I encourage you to make the most of live broadcasts of church services and teachings of the Word of God to spiritually conclude the Lenten period, Holy Week and to celebrate Pascha – the resurrection of our Lord.

Many of you will be very concerned about not being able to get your traditional Easter baskets blessed. I know that for you these not only contain blessed traditional foods for your family, but also consider the consumption of these foods as a source of spiritual nourishment and God’s blessing upon us. Allow me to allay your fears by assuring you that you will still be able to have your traditional Easter baskets blessed. Just as the Holy Father blesses people on St. Peter’s Square in the Vatican, and his blessing also extends to those who connect with him through radio and telecommunications, in the same way your Easter baskets will be blessed through online broadcasts. During the broadcasts and live-streaming of Easter Saturday and Sunday services, the Church is making a sacramental intention to bless foods for anyone who is not physically present in church, but offers Easter foods for blessing in their homes during the prayers and Services online. There is an obligation however to have fully participated spiritually in the broadcast of the Easter Divine Liturgy.

My dear beloved brothers and sisters of the Holy Family Eparchy. As your newly appointed pastor and Shepherd, I wholeheartedly assure you of my continued prayers. Let us spiritually continue to support each other through sincere prayer so we may journey together along this difficult path of heeding the advice of the medical and public health professionals. I ask that you also continue to support your priests, who are feeling greatly concerned and anxious about how they can best continue to serve all your pastoral and spiritual needs. Let us pray that the Lord opens our eyes to a fresh charity towards others and gives us the strength we need to live our faith.

The blessing of the Lord and the protection of the Most Holy Mother of God and ever-virgin Mary be upon you!

+KENNETH